

**European Association of Archaeologists – EAA 2018 – paper proposal  
(session 780)**

**Dealing with uncertainty: improving mental health and wellbeing in an  
archaeological workplace**

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As this session call observes, the archaeological workplace – in fact, the heritage workplace – has been transformed in recent years. Themes in the UK include archaeological professionalization; the development of commercial archaeology (hand-in-hand with national and European legislative change); a large increase in university attendance; and since 2008 an austerity agenda that has seen massive (and ongoing) cuts to local authority archaeology services, museums, and other cultural heritage institutions.

As a result of market fluctuations, impending legislative upheaval, and biting budget reductions, the current environment is one of change and uncertainty. These can be difficult for organisations and individuals to handle. What can be done to support and sustain the people who are at the root of our heritage? Not only practitioners and colleagues, but also our peers, our partners, our public, the next generation?

This paper presents one way that a large heritage organisation, Historic England, is taking steps to support not only the physical, but also the mental, health of its staff. Drawing on recent examples of projects showing that heritage can benefit well-being, I suggest that Historic England's approach can have an effect beyond its personnel, to the wider community.